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## APPROACHING PARADISE

Here in the white, white wing of a gull  
you may glimpse paradise. In the flensing sun.  
The prodigal sea, bent back on itself,  
has the rough green mind of paradise.

Paradise is in the breadfruit's low sling,  
the purple scrawl of bougainvillea up a wall.  
It is in the yachts' clatter and wheel,  
the fishermen's nylon stringing the wind.

You will find paradise in a whiting  
drowning in a bucket of freshwater,  
in the jammed blade of a fishscale  
like quicklime under the thumb.

Women roast themselves in coconut oil  
and children run bare-legged in paradise.  
Praise them. And praise the black-faced bat  
traveling even in sleep through paradise.

This fringe of stormstreaked shacks  
with genuflecting surfers riding in,  
this line of Norfolk pine. Wet dogs  
nosing the muck of a king tide.

Praise the bloated body washed in,  
the gentle nibbling of baitfish and bream,  
bikini-clad tourists yanked out by rips,  
the summer and violence of paradise.

A shark's slit corpse gapes pink on the jetty,  
its head yanked on a hook like a sacrifice.  
Its shank is smooth and black as paradise.  
Men with knives kneel down like seraphim.